

NOTiCIAS DEL OSO

February 17, 2010

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In honor of our newest ESL student at Berry Middle School, this issue is dedicated to learning tips for working with true Newcomer students. For those of you who do not teach 7th grade (or one of her electives), last week a student who is not only brand new to Berry but also to the US in general joined our student population.

It's not uncommon for students to join us in the middle of the year at the 7th grade level or higher, because of the structure of education in some other countries. While education is provided for free through the college level in many South American countries such as Argentina and Chile, most of the countries in Central America - including Mexico - stop handing out free education much earlier. Therefore, when the parents decide to move their student to the US, they are not restricted by a school schedule, unless they could afford to pay for education.

Hope you all enjoyed the snow last week!

Erin Van Sickle

Newcomer Notes

Essential Vocabulary for newcomers

Assignment
Attendance
Book
Chair
Computer
Consequence
Deadline
Desk
Detention
Door
Due Date
Essay
Exam
Experiment
Fact
Formula
Friend
"Get Out"

I wish that I could tell you all that there's a simple formula to follow to help students learn the English language in middle school. Sadly, if there is then it's one that no one in Mesquite ISD has heard of yet. However, I will offer some tips and tricks to help you make content comprehensible for a newcomer student.

I will say that you don't have to reinvent the wheel when working with a newcomer student, just make adjustments similar to the ones that you might make for a special education student. Here are some tips to help out.

Partner Work

- Normally when a student comes into a school from a different country, they are given a "buddy" to work with and help them out. As great an idea as this is, eventually we need to help the students branch out.

- After a couple of weeks, place your newcomer with a brand new partner to work in a group. I suggest using a monitored student, one that you know still speaks the language at home or perhaps at school with their friends. This monitored student will have a larger vocabulary base than the assigned "buddy" who is still in ESL.

- Always provide the student with an opportunity to write the answers down. For many learning types, writing the English language is key - even if it's just transcribing their group's answers.

Go
Grade
Here
Home
Homework
Learn
Lunch
New
Nurse
Paper
Paperwork
Parent
Pen
Pencil
Practice
Principal
Open
Opinion
Quiet
Remember
Seat
Table
Tardy
Teacher
Test
Try
Work
Write

Reading Enrichment

- It may sound old-fashioned, but hearing you read or speak in longer sentences is key to helping a newcomer understand the flow and meter of the English language. This is one reason why I'll include my newest student in all of the instructional time for the activity before assigning a different, leveled task.
- Remember that it needs to be YOU. I love having my kiddos read, but for the next few weeks with our fresh newcomer I'll be doing all of the reading for the class so that she hears an "expert" English example.

Body Language

- Despite the fact that we've covered motions, pictures, body language, etc. to death - it has to be said again. Often, when my minimal Spanish fails me, my lower level students will fill in the blanks if I use the right motions.
- BE DELIBERATE with your body language. Students read waaaay more into body language when it's the best form of communication they have.
- One note: Getting a newcomer's attention often relies on physical means. While a pat on the back will make one student jump, a tap on the desk may be more startling to another. Don't worry about it the first time a student seems surprised by an action, it's probably a slight culture difference. Make a note of the reaction and move on. They'll pick up their clue from you and act like it was no big deal, too.

Celebrate the Small Stuff

- When a native English speaker asks to go to the restroom or thanks a teacher in English, we don't even notice it. Often the same happens when a newcomer uses a new English phrase, because we take for granted that it's common knowledge. A HUGE struggle at this age is giving newcomers the encouragement to take risks and put themselves out there with their developing fluency. When you notice any achievement for a newcomer, tell them! If they feel that it's making a difference, they will continue to work. However, if success goes unnoticed too many times, it makes it easier to give up on second-language fluency in a state where at least 50% of the population speaks your native tongue.

ESL Student of the Week

Name: Valeria Lozano

Grade: 7th

First language: Spanish

Fun personality fact: In the few days that Valeria has been here, she's already started to adapt. She's answering to "Valerie," she's started understanding some of the essential words listed in the columns of this newsletter, and she's adjusting well socially, too. She's been speaking (through a translator) to the Arabic students in my classes, not just the Hispanic ones.